

# Fact Sheet



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## Malibu Lagoon Restoration and Enhancement Project

The beautiful Malibu coastline just got even better! After decades of decline, the Malibu Lagoon has received much-needed care that has fixed the water circulation problems and set it on a path to improved health. Join the thousands of people who visit, care for and enjoy Malibu Lagoon State Beach every year and share in the success of a 20-year effort to enhance this precious coastal wetland.

**Our lagoon is better.** The contaminated soil and trash built up over decades are gone, and water is flowing through the re-shaped channels and regularly refreshing the revitalized wetland habitats. The lagoon once again does nature's work of providing food and shelter to a diversity of creatures, from mud-dwelling invertebrates to migrating birds to endangered steelhead trout. All will benefit and some – especially the birds – are already present in large numbers and thriving in the restored Lagoon

**We fixed the flow.** The reshaped channels of the lagoon allow tides and creek flows to remove built-up sediments and flush them out to sea, especially on high tides or during rainstorms when the creek runs high. This natural cleansing of the lagoon is essential to flushing wastes from animals, and keeping healthy levels of oxygen for creatures to breathe. We've fixed problems caused by the filling of Malibu Lagoon over the years, and restored natural water flows.

**Our commitment never ends.** Detailed monitoring of the water, plants and wildlife will continue at the lagoon, with updates available on our website ([link here](#)). Volunteers and staff are weeding the newly planted areas and educating visitors about the lagoon and the enhancement that has made it a healthier place for people and wildlife. New information is shared with other scientists and used to continually improve management of the lagoon and other precious southern California wetlands.

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California State Parks on the Internet: [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)>



## Questions and Answers about Malibu Lagoon

***What was wrong with the Lagoon?*** The lagoon had been filled with waste soils and trash over many decades. There was less ability for tides to flow in and out of the lagoon so there was little scour or “flushing” of the lagoon channels. This resulted in a build-up of nutrients and fine sediments (mud) in the lagoon, which in turn caused low oxygen levels in the water. Without oxygen, aquatic life cannot breathe, so very little was able to grow in the lagoon. It was not good habitat for the variety of worms, mollusks, crustaceans and other tiny creatures that are food for the fish and birds that depend on wetlands for survival.

***What changes were made at the Lagoon?*** The lagoon channels were dredged to remove built-up sediment that was causing low oxygen levels in the water, and reshaped to allow better flushing by creek flows and tides. New trails and educational features, such as the outdoor classroom and the natural bird blind, were installed to make visits to the lagoon even more inviting and meaningful for the public. Picnic areas, native trees and interactive artistic features including the watershed sculpture fountain and the “tidal clock” all add to the beauty and appeal of Malibu Lagoon State Beach.

***Where are all the plants?*** Invasive plants that harm wildlife at the lagoon were removed by hand or using machinery. Native plants were carefully removed and stored at a nursery and have now been replanted, along with tens of thousands of newly grown ones. Those new plants started out tiny. Under the loving care of our staff and volunteers, they are growing fast and will soon provide a lush and healthy habitat for native wildlife at the lagoon.

***What about the animals?*** During the enhancement project, fish and wildlife were carefully removed from the area by trained biologists and safely placed in adjacent habitat areas. Breeding or nesting birds were monitored and protected from any disturbance until they fledged their young and moved away on their own. Many animals are already returning to the enhanced lagoon – just ask the birders!

***Is the water clean now?*** The water is healthier for plants and animals. It still contains bacteria and other things that could make a person sick – so bring you water bottle, don’t drink the lagoon! – but it also has more oxygen needed by aquatic animals and less nutrient pollution. Excess nutrients cause algae blooms and oxygen depletion that harm other plants and make the water unlivable for fish and the tiny creatures they feed on.

***Will I be able to see birds and fish when I visit the lagoon?*** Yes, you are able to get close to the water and have great views of birds and other wildlife at the restored lagoon. The new pedestrian paths improve access for people of all ages. Bird viewing areas, designed by birders, include raised hillocks

with clear views of the tidal channels, and a natural-materials bird blind similar to those in other world-renowned birding destinations. Bird-watching is even better at the restored lagoon.

***What about access for school groups and surfers?*** Many features were designed especially for these groups. The new shade structure makes the children's gathering place more inviting. Kids can also interact with the features highlighted along the new trail – a sculpture that changes with and reflects the tides, a natural bird-blind for sitting quietly and watching animals, seating areas and viewing platforms with informational signs are all part of the finished plan. Surfers walk through a natural, thriving environment on their way to the beach – a unique part of the Malibu surfing experience – and even have a special “surfer's express” pathway so they don't get held up behind large school groups while on their way to the perfect waves of Surfrider Beach.

***How can I help?*** The lagoon needs you! Support the lagoon by visiting often, and by helping out at volunteer events to care for native plants at the lagoon. Pick up trash at Coastal Cleanup Day and all year round! Bring your family and friends to a restored Malibu Lagoon and enjoy the beautiful coastal environment that we all cherish.

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